

# **DECISIVE OPERATIONS DEFINED**

**A MONOGRAPH  
BY  
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Infantry**



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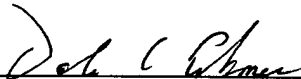
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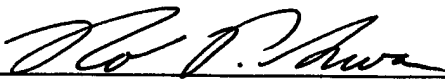
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## ABSTRACT

### Decisive Operations: Defined

By Major Thomas C. Dovey JR, USA, 41 pages.

This monograph answers the question: Is the term, decisive operations, as defined in the Final Draft of Field Manual (FM) 100-40, Tactics, consistent with Joint and U.S. Army doctrine?

This monograph concludes that the definition for decisive operations provided in FM 100-40, Tactics, is inconsistent with FM 100-5. The definition fails to adequately the purpose of the mission.

The definition found in FM 100-40, Tactics, states that decisive operations are "All actions applying to military capabilities that strike at decisive points." This definition fails to adequately address the purpose of the mission and therefore is incomplete. Any definition for decisive operations should be linked to decisive points and center of gravity in order to insure that the mission is accomplished. Decisive points provide an advantage when achieved but do not achieve the purpose alone. Decisive points provide access to the center of gravity. Operations that omit the center of gravity fail to achieve the purpose.

This monograph brings out shortcomings in current doctrinal discussions for decisive operations and recommends the following definition: "the simultaneous application of military capabilities in order to achieve a purpose. It is implied that the purpose should be linked to concepts such as decisive points and center of gravity." This linkage ensures that the adversary's center of gravity attracts the focus of the commander's military capabilities and the purpose associated with the center of gravity is achieved. It is recommended that the definition found in the FM 100-40 (Coordinating Draft) include linkage to the purpose and its dependence on the concept of center of gravity.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

This monograph answers the question: Is the term, decisive operations, as defined in the Final Draft of Field Manual (FM) 100-40, Tactics, consistent with Joint and U. S. Army doctrine? The intent of FM 100-40 is to provide fundamental principles for U.S. Army tactics in coordination with existing doctrine prescribed in current field manuals. FM 100-40 defines decisive operations as "All actions applying to military capabilities that strike at decisive points. They support the higher commander's intent."<sup>1</sup> The term is not defined specifically in any other Joint or U. S. Army doctrinal manual.

Chapter two proposes an alternative definition for decisive operations. It defines decisive operations as an operation designated by the commander that applies simultaneously overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission. The purpose should be linked to the concepts of center of gravity and decisive points. This definition is explained sequentially by reviewing applicable theory and doctrine in respect to the concepts of center of gravity and decisive points.

Traditional military theorists such as General Carl Von Clausewitz and Baron Antoine De Jomini addressed the

concept of decisive operations, with terms such as center of gravity, and decisive points. These terms enable military leaders to focus effects and synchronize actions against the enemy. All theoretical explanations for decisive operations recognize the achievement of a purpose by one force over another.

Descriptions of decisive operations provided by the military theorists hold true when explaining doctrine for decisive operations in the Joint context. The term is not defined in Joint doctrine. Joint doctrine only addresses decisive operations through discussion of decisive points and operational art. It states that Joint warfare conducts decisive operations in order to maximize the effects of all service components at the operational level.

Theory also influences the use of the term of decisive operations for the U.S. Army. Theoretical concepts such as center of gravity and decisive points are corner stones upon which doctrine prescribed in U.S. Army Field Manuals is explained. Selected passages from FM 100-5, Operations, support the argument for including the concept of Center of gravity in any definition for decisive operations.

Moreover, progressive military doctrine writers are contemplating including decisive operations as one part of a new battlefield framework.

Three brief historical case studies in chapter three enhance the understanding of the definition of decisive operations proposed in chapter two. The first case study is Operation Just Cause. It portrays U.S. military forces executing decisive operations in Panama over a brief period in December 1991. The second case study is the "Vicksburg Campaign" of the American Civil War. This example represents the conduct of decisive operations from December 1862 to July 1863. It also illustrates Major General (MG) Grant's focus on the purpose of the campaign and its link to decisive operations.

The third case study discusses Napoleon's crushing victory over allied forces at Austerlitz on December 2, 1805. It depicts decisive operations through the application of overwhelming military capabilities at key times and places on the battlefield. All three case studies present the proposed definition of decisive operations and its suitability for explaining the end result of military conflict.

Chapter four then examines the definition of the term found in FM 100-40, Tactics, in respect to the definitions elaborated upon in chapter three and answers supporting questions cementing the argument that FM 100-40 definition is inconsistent. Those supporting questions are:



- What is the definition of decisive operations?
- How does the Final Draft of FM 100-40 define "decisive operations"?
- How does FM 100-40 definition compare with FM 100-5?

The first two supporting questions are summarized from discussions in previous chapters. The third supporting question provides agreements and disagreements between the new Tactics FM and FM 100-5, Operations. The greatest disparity is the failure of the new Tactics FM to adequately address the purpose of the mission.

Chapter five draws conclusions from the analysis in chapter four on the validity of FM 100-40's definition and makes recommendations. It concludes that decisive operations are not uniformly defined nor clearly understood. The proposed definition is recommended for consideration in the coordinating draft of FM 100-40, Tactics. It also recommends the incorporation of the Concept of Center of gravity in the new FM. In addition to Jomini's concept of decisive points, center of gravity focuses commanders at all levels on the purpose of the mission. This concept is key for delineating the purpose of any operation and designating decisive operations.

## Chapter 2: Decisive Operations Defined

### Section 1: Introduction

The American Heritage Dictionary sets the parameters for this chapter with the following definitions.

Decisive is defined as

1. Having the power to settle a dispute or doubt; conclusive 2. Characterized by decision and firmness; resolute; determined. 3. Beyond doubt; unmistakable; unquestionable.<sup>2</sup>

Operations are

A process or series of acts performed to effect a certain purpose or result.<sup>3</sup>

### Section 2: Proposed Definition of decisive operations

Decisive operations are defined as, "the focused applications of overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission. This purpose should be linked to the concepts of center of gravity and decisive points." The following illustrations and scenario further explain the definition.

In the scenario, a U.S. Army division commander is directed to seize an enemy airfield with the purpose of preventing enemy air sustainment operations. The enemy defends the airfield with infantry. Enemy rocket launchers

and rotary wing aircraft located nearby. The enemy is running low on supplies and desperately needs resupply to retain the airfield and continue defending in the area. Before proceeding with this scenario, the concept of Center of gravity is defined. "Centers of Gravity are those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight." <sup>4</sup>

The U.S. Army defines the center of gravity as "The hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."<sup>5</sup> The concept of Center of gravity and its origins are examined in detail later in this chapter.

The division commander receives the mission of seizing the airfield with the purpose of preventing sustainment of enemy forces by air. The division commander determines that the center of gravity at his level for the attack is the dismounted infantry defending the airfield. This center of gravity is tied directly to the mission of seizing the airfield.

As the process unfolds, once the center of gravity (enemy infantry) is destroyed then the purpose (prevent sustainment of enemy forces by air) is achieved. The division commander applies overwhelming military capabilities (direct and indirect fire) to simultaneously

achieve the purpose that is linked to the center of gravity.

The division commander also identifies the enemy rocket launchers as a threat to his forces and designates them as decisive points for his attack.

Decisive point(s) are defined as:

1. A point, if retained, that provides a commander with a marked advantage over his opponent. Decisive points are usually geographic in nature but could include other physical elements.
2. A time or location where enemy weakness is positioned that allows overwhelming combat power to be generated against it. It could be an enemy weakness to be exploited.
3. Conveys to subordinates a potential point of decision that the commander has identified through his estimate process to apply overwhelming combat power.<sup>6</sup>

The rocket launchers are attacked through shaping operations, which support the decisive operation focused on the enemy infantry (center of gravity). The decisive point, (destruction of the rocket launchers) is gained and provides an advantage to the division commander by elimination of the indirect fire threat to his forces. However, alone destruction of the rocket launchers by themselves does not achieve the purpose of the mission. Whereas destruction of the infantry, the center of gravity,

enables the division commander to seize the airfield and achieve the purpose. Destruction of the rocket launchers only set the condition for success of the decisive operation, the attack on the infantry.

The division commander therefore plans and executes decisive operations using overwhelming military capability consisting of: combined arms task forces, joint fixed wing air and artillery to destroy the infantry. The commander plans shaping and other support operations in concert with the decisive operation. The shaping and other support operations set the conditions and facilitate the decisive operation.

As figures one and two indicate, the U.S. forces overwhelm the enemy forces and quickly seize the airfield. Soon the enemy airfield is made ready to receive U.S. sustainment assets and thus becomes a friendly center of gravity.

In Figure one, Joint Fixed Wing Air attacks the enemy rocket launchers and rotary wing air as a shaping operation. Simultaneously, the division commander positions his forces to destroy the enemy infantry defending the airfield. Thus the U.S. Forces attacked a decisive point, the rocket launchers, in support of the decisive operation on the enemy infantry defending the airfield.

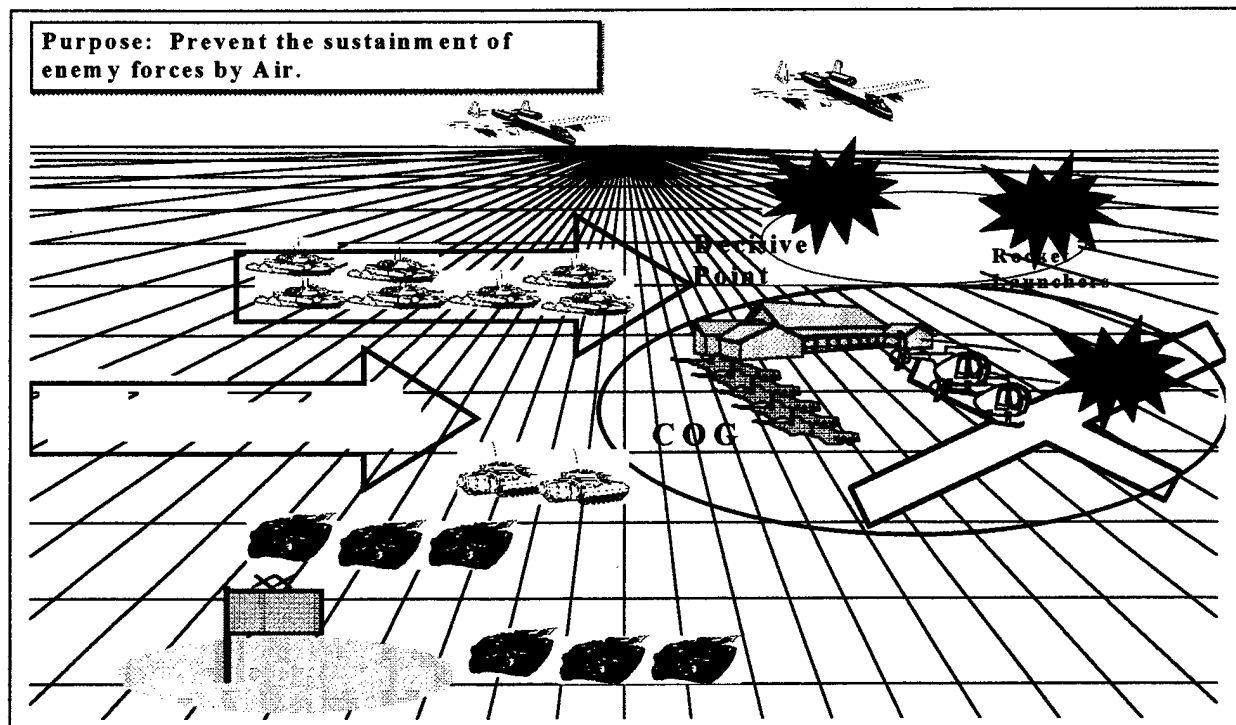


Figure 1.

Figure two depicts the simultaneous destruction of the enemy infantry and rotary wing aircraft as the task forces maneuver to destroy the infantry and achieve the purpose. This is a snapshot of the decisive operation. Decisive operations are one element of a battlefield success as depicted in this scenario. As discussed earlier, decisive operations focused on destroying the infantry are synchronized with shaping and other supporting actions in order to achieve the designated purpose.

The U.S. Army division commander applies overwhelming military capability in the form of two armor task forces, direct support artillery and close air to achieve the purpose. As Figure two infers, the U.S. forces overwhelm the enemy forces and quickly seize the airfield. The division commander directs his armor elements to continue to move east and establish security. The enemy airfield is repaired and receives U.S. sustainment assets becoming a friendly Center of gravity.

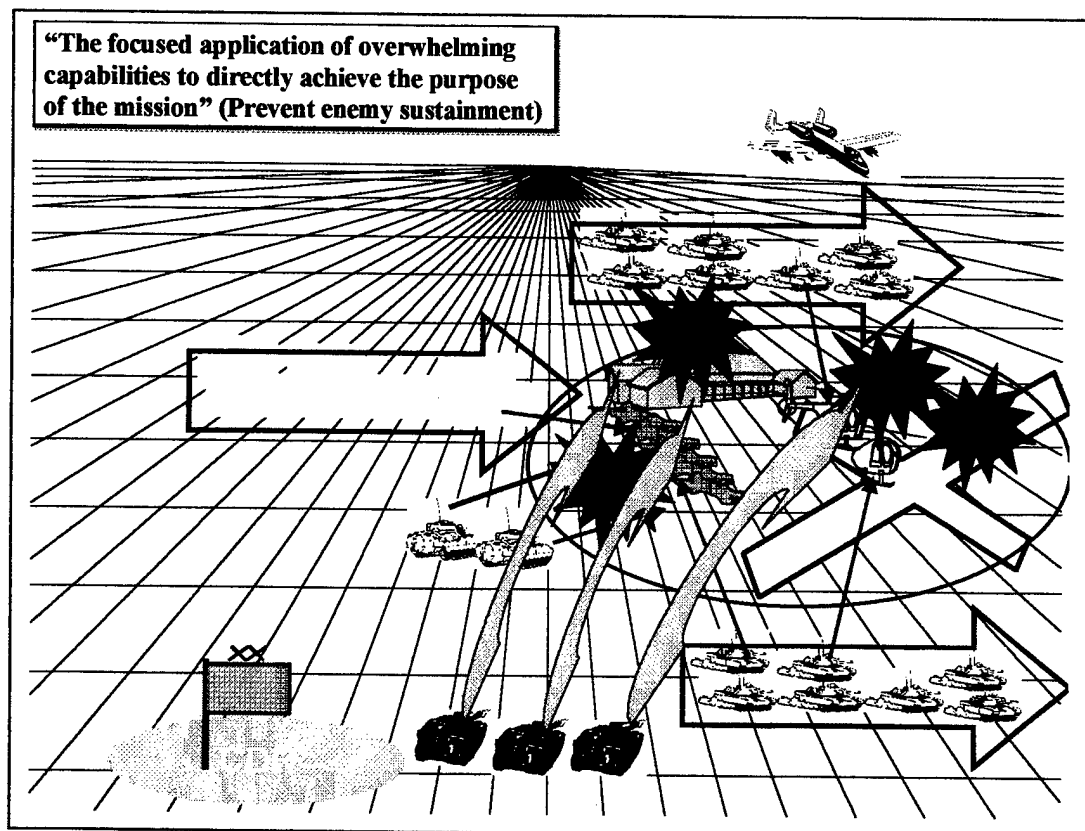


Figure 2.

The scenario constantly relies on concepts such as center of gravity and decisive points to explain the events. Follow-on sections of this chapter explain the relevance of the terms and linkage to decisive operations. The terms focus the commander in conducting the decisive operations in concert with shaping operations to achieve the end result or purpose.

U.S. military doctrine prescribes the designation of the purpose of any operation in the commander's intent and mission analysis.<sup>7</sup> Understanding this principle is key to understanding the proposed definition of decisive operations. All actions conducted by U.S. military force achieve a designated purpose. The purposes are often difficult to ascertain during the commander's evaluation or the Military Decision-Making Process.

However, concepts such as the center of gravity and decisive point aid commanders in focusing their resources for accomplishing the purpose. As evidenced by the scenario, those terms provide the conduit for explaining why an operation is done.

Center of gravity and decisive points actualize the picture of achieving the purpose for the commander. These terms derived from ideas of two different theorists are now embedded in Joint and U.S. Army doctrine. An explanation of



both and their linkage to doctrine solidifies the relevance and accuracy of the proposed definition for decisive operations.

### Section 3: Theory

General Carl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831)<sup>8</sup>, a Prussian general and military theorist, stated that theory is "the representation of art by way of concepts."<sup>9</sup>

Theory is defined as a collection of assumptions, accepted principles, and rules of procedure devised to analyze, predict or otherwise explain the nature of behavior of a specified set of phenomena.<sup>10</sup> Theoretical concepts provide the means to relate decisive operations to doctrine.

After the Napoleonic Era (1815), Clausewitz proposed the concept, Center of gravity in his book On War. He defined the Center of gravity as:

"Hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends-Center of power."<sup>11</sup>

He goes on to state:

"Enemy strength must be traced back to fewest possible sources, ... ideally to one alone."<sup>12</sup>

His statement implies there are multiple centers of gravity but one is preferred. It provides a basis for the focus of decisive operations. Clausewitz states in Book Eight, On War that strategic centers of gravity are:

"Country's capitol, army of protector, community of interest, personalities of leaders and public opinion."<sup>13</sup>

The airfield pictured in figures one and two represents a Strategic Center of gravity for echelons above the U.S. Army Division. This one "hub of power" or multiple sources of power provides objective(s) and link to the purpose of why U.S. Army units conduct operations.

In the same manner in which Clausewitz offered the term, Center of gravity, another theorist, Baron Antoine De Jomini expressed his views on war. Jomini (1779-1869)<sup>14</sup> was a French general. Jomini conceived the concept of decisive point(s).

In every battle, it should be well understood that there is in every battlefield a decisive point the possession of which, more than of any other helps to secure the victory by enabling its holder to make a proper application of the principles of war. Arrangements should therefore be made for striking the decisive blow upon this point.<sup>15</sup>

This passage highlights the fact that any object selected as a decisive point attracts decisive actions. In this context, action is defined as "the state or process of acting or doing... The transmission of energy force or influence."<sup>16</sup> It is assumed that operations and actions mean the same when used with decisive in this monograph.

Decisive operations assist the commander in gaining

freedom of maneuver. Conversely, control of a decisive point exhausts the attacker's momentum and facilitates the defender's counterattack.

Jomini's Art of War discusses in great detail the strategic and tactical levels of war. His theory of decisive point is useful, as a tool for focusing friendly effects to combat an adversary for an advantage is still relevant today. Jomini's theories help us understand decisive operations at the strategic and tactical level of war but are inconclusive at the operational level of war. None the less the proposed definition for decisive operations is applicable at all levels of war.

The next section on doctrine mirrors the importance of concepts such as center of gravity and decisive points on explaining principles and conveying the definition of decisive operations.

#### Section 4: Doctrine

Doctrine is defined in Joint Publication (JP), 1-2, as "fundamental principles by which military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application".<sup>17</sup>

The U.S. defines joint operations as "a general term to describe military actions conducted by joint forces, or by service forces in relationships<sup>18</sup>..." The Army definition for joint operations is "operations carried on by two or more of the armed forces."<sup>19</sup> A joint definition for decisive operations is not found in the Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia or Joint Publication 3.0, Doctrine for Joint Operations. Joint doctrine explains the theory of decisive operations through terms such as center of gravity and decisive points.

The U.S. Army, armed with situational understanding, conducts decisive operations by positioning combat power throughout the battlefield. This unique capability-to exercise direct, continuing, and comprehensive control over land, its resources, and people-is the essence of the Army's contribution to the joint force in winning the nation's wars.

U.S. Army doctrine concurs with the preceding sentence and states, "By applying all these theories, either separately or in a concert, the commander forms a concept to set conditions for operations and battles with conclusive, and sometimes decisive results".<sup>20</sup> Theoretical concepts discussed previously make a significant impact on U. S. Army doctrine.

The term decisive actions (operations) and the concept of decisive point is not new to the Army vocabulary as evidenced by the following passage:

Decisive action results from clear cut, comprehensive plans, based on a full utilization of all available strength and means. The opportunity for decisive action may be foreseen initially or it may be created during the operations...By surprise, by skillful use of the terrain, and by concentration of the power of all arms at decisive points the commander should plan to secure and retain the initiative. <sup>21</sup>

This definition was prescribed in FM 100-15, Field Service and Regulation of Larger Units, 1942.

The term, decisive operations, mirrors the term "main attack"<sup>22</sup> found in FM 100-5, Operations. Main attack entails the priority of effort for offensive operations in US Army operational doctrine. The main attack gives prominence to the positioning of combat elements to win the battle or engagement in the close battle. The tactical commander weighs the combat element conducting the main attack so that element was insured success and thus victory realized. However, this term does not account for the effects of modern technology.

The proposed definition of decisive operations allows the warfighter to exploit U.S. technology and disintegrate the adversary in a non-linear environment by applying

overwhelming military capability to achieve the purpose. Purpose is linked to decisive points and centers of gravity, which remains relevant to the asymmetrical environment and technological advances. The charter of the proposed definition of decisive operations is to remain timeless and relevant to doctrine like the terms center of gravity and decisive point.

The effort behind the rewrite of FM 100-5, Operations, also recognizes this factor. Decisive operations cannot be accomplished without shaping and sustaining operations. These other operations support the complicated aspects of technology and operational art on the geographic stadium of war and construct the framework of the modern battlefield.<sup>23</sup>

The Army's manual for decisive operations, FM 100-7, realizes the importance of decisive operations in the following quote: "Commanders at all levels must organize, resource, train and employ their forces to be the decisive force when and where required."<sup>24</sup> However, this doctrinal manual named for decisive operations does not clearly define what it is.

The overall goal of defining decisive operations in compliance with theory and U.S. doctrine is to standardize its meaning and enhance its understanding.

## Section 5: Conclusion

This chapter simply defined decisive operations as the focused applications of overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission. The purpose should be linked to the theoretical concepts of center of gravity and decisive points. Decisive Operations are conducted in concert with other operations that establish conditions for achieving the purpose.

Two figures and an imaginary scenario described the definition as a U.S. Army division commander conducted offensive operations. The commander focused his military capabilities to achieve a purpose through the use of timeless concepts.

Those concepts: center of gravity and decisive point were explained in relation to decisive operations. The background behind Clausewitz's center of gravity and Jomini's decisive point underscore the linkage of those terms to the proposed definition of decisive operations. The section on theory evidenced the definition as applicable to all spectrums of armed conflict.

Theory discussed the principal applications of the concepts of center of gravity and decisive points in the

form of doctrine. U.S. Army doctrinal field manuals use the theoretical concepts for explaining how the U.S. Army fights. The term decisive operations is not specifically covered but vaguely understood through the two concepts. Any proposed definition for decisive operations should be linked to centers of gravity and decisive point for refining the purpose of the operation.



## Chapter 3:

### Historical Case Studies on Decisive Operations

#### Section 1: Introduction

This chapter reinforces the definition of decisive operations explained in chapter two. Three historical case studies in this chapter enhance the understanding of the definition. Each of the three case studies highlights the concepts of center of gravity and decisive points. Even though staged over different periods of history, each case study shows the process of a commander simultaneously applying military capabilities to achieve a purpose.

The first case study is Operation Just Cause. It portrays U.S. military forces executing decisive operations in Panama over a brief period in December 1991. The second case study is the "Vicksburg Campaign" of the American Civil War. This example represents the conduct of decisive operations over an extended period. It also illustrates MG Grant's focus on the purpose of the campaign and its link to decisive operations.

The third case study discusses Napoleon's crushing victory over allied forces at Austerlitz. It depicts decisive operations through the application of overwhelming

military capabilities at key times and places on the battlefield.

All three historical case studies present the proposed definition of decisive operations and its suitability for explaining the end result of wars, campaigns and battles.

## Section 2: Operation Just Cause

The invasion of Panama explains the proposed definition at the strategic level of war. Operation Just Cause was an operation designated by Commander, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). The SOUTHCOM Commander applied simultaneous overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the removal of President Manuel Noreiga from office and restore peace to the Republic of Panama.

FM 100-5, Operations, provides the following details of the decisive operation. Operation Just Cause began in the early hours of 20 December 1989, as an U.S. joint force conducted multiple, simultaneous strikes in the Republic of Panama. Military elements of the joint force simultaneously attacked or secured twenty-seven critical objectives throughout the Republic of Panama. The synchronized attack of enemy command and control facilities and troop concentrations paralyzed and crushed the Panamanian defense Force.<sup>25</sup>

The objectives included US family housing areas and critical U.S. facilities, which were secured during the attack on Panamanian forces. American forces established effective control of most Panamanian military targets and much of the infrastructure within 24 hours, with limited casualties.<sup>26</sup>

Operation Just Cause exemplifies decisive operations as overwhelming military capabilities in the form of airborne insertions, ground force offensive actions and fixed wing attacks on Panamanian Command and Military Structures. These military activities were all focused on destroying the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) and restoring peace to the Republic of Panama.

The center of gravity, the PDF, was destroyed through decisive points such as: removing and arresting Panama's dictator, Manuel Noreiga. The SOUTHCOM decisive operation was destruction of the PDF, where Noreiga derived his source of power. Noreiga was able to rule through the use of the PDF and apply terror to the people of Panama and American service families in the time period prior to Operation Just Cause.

This center of gravity was destroyed through decisive points linked to the purpose. Shaping operations conducted in concert with decisive operations featured the following:

elimination of Noreiga's command and control centers, and seizure of key roads and bridges that prevented the movement of the center of gravity, the PDF. Decisive operations featured the destruction of Noreiga's Panamanian Defense Forces, the center of gravity, reestablishing restoring democratic government in a matter of days.

Operation Just Cause was a synchronized victory characterized by shaping operations setting the conditions for the decisive operation. The decisive operation defeated the PDF and achieved the purpose of restoring peace to the Republic of Panama. The purpose was clearly achieved.

### Section 3: Vicksburg Campaign

Vicksburg in contrast to Operation Just Cause shows the definition of decisive operations, during an extended campaign. In the beginning of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, the Confederates erected strategic fortifications along the Mississippi River. The purpose being control of its lifeline for sustainment in the West. Conversely, the Union found the Mississippi River vitally important for allowing uninterrupted passage of Union troops and supplies into the South. Vicksburg was the location of the strongest and most important Confederate fortification.

MG Ulysses S. Grant, commanding the Union Army of the Tennessee, conducted an operational campaign during the period December 1862 to July 1863 to seize Vicksburg, the Center of gravity, for the purpose of controlling the Mississippi River. LTG John C. Pemberton commanded the 50,000 Confederates in the region defending the Western region of Mississippi and Vicksburg.

This campaign featured shaping operations that set the conditions for the decisive operation of seizing Vicksburg. Shaping operations were evidenced by:

1. Moving south to a suitable site for conducting amphibious operations to cross the Mississippi River.
2. Isolating Pemberton's forces from reinforcement.
3. Disruption of Confederate lines of operations in the Mississippi region by Union Cavalry.

These shaping actions set the conditions for the decisive operation of seizing Vicksburg, the Center of gravity, and achievement of the purpose that was Union control of the Mississippi River.

After two unsuccessful attacks on the fortification of Vicksburg resulting in severe losses to the Army of Tennessee, Grant opted for siege warfare to capture

Vicksburg. This phase ended with LTG Pemberton's surrender of Vicksburg to MG Grant on July 4, 1863.

The surrender of Vicksburg was a great victory for the Union. The Confederates lost an army and the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy was severed from its southern states, creating insurmountable logistics and strategic problems.

MG Grant applied overwhelming military capabilities in Mississippi and the western portion of the Confederacy to capture Vicksburg. Grant employed a quantifiably superior Union force to achieve control of the Mississippi River, an end result.

#### Section 4: Austerlitz

A historical example that further explains this definition and reflects its accurate description of the term is the battle of Austerlitz. The French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, led French forces known as the "Grand Army" in a decisive tactical victory over Russian and Austrian Coalition Forces during the period December 1-2 1805.<sup>27</sup>

This battle is known historically for the sharp contrast between military traditions, doctrines and command systems. It illustrates the prescribed definition of

decisive operations at the tactical level of war because it clearly depicts all aspects of the definition. "...Napoleon learned that Prussia was preparing to enter the war on the allied side. What Napoleon needed was one great victory that would shatter the coalition and knock one or both of his opponents out of the war."<sup>28</sup>

Napoleon realized that the Russian Austrian Coalition was vulnerable. In the area of operation, he applied overwhelming military capabilities to destroy the coalition around a terrain feature known as Pratzen Ridge near the small town of Austerlitz. Marshall Soult's Infantry conducted the decisive operation focused on the allied mainbody of troops in the center of Napoleon's Grand Army as depicted in figure three.<sup>29</sup>

This decisive operation was shaped by deception operations, which led the Coalition forces to believe that the Grand Army was weak and Napoleon is indecisive.<sup>30</sup> Other shaping actions which set the conditions for the decisive operation conducted on Pratzen Ridge were supporting offensive efforts by Marshall Lannes' French Infantry Corps on the left and Davout's Infantry on the right flank which substantially diverted allied efforts.

As the battle unfolded to the decisive operation, Napoleon arrayed his quantifiably inferior forces on the

battlefield in respect to the Pratzen Ridge and his lines of operation. Artillery secured his left flank and was defended by an Infantry Corps. The bulk of the French Infantry under Marshall Soult moved forward slowly based on the rhythm of the battle to occupy the ridge. A small combined Cavalry and Infantry force secured the right flank. Napoleon withheld a cavalry reserve with the priority of commitment to the North.

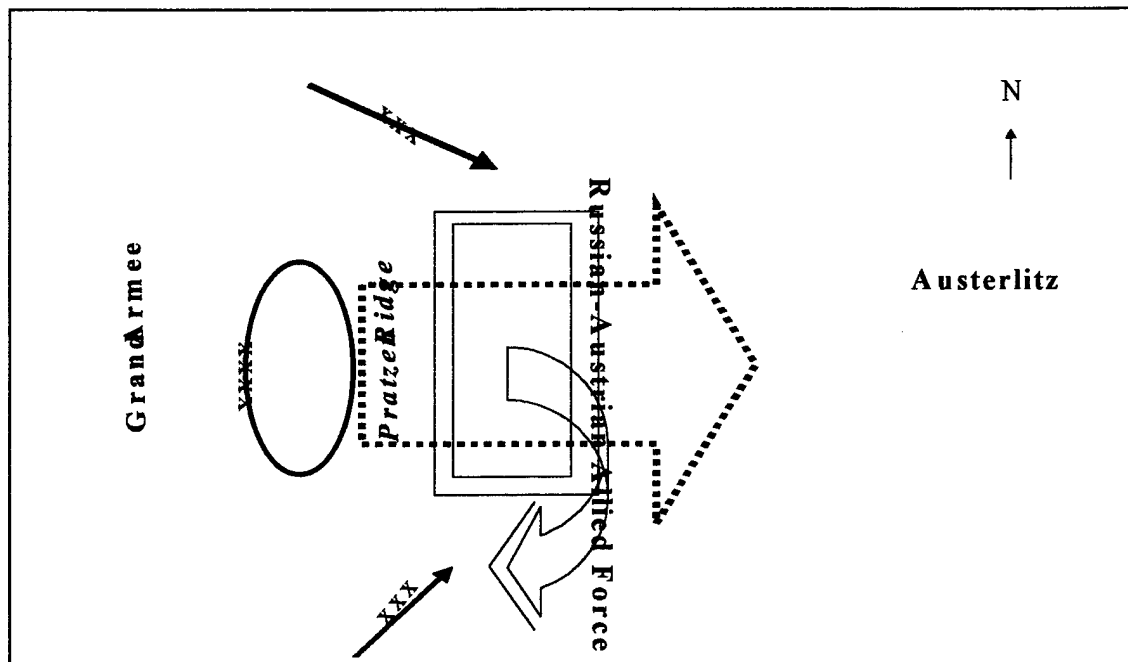


Figure 3.

In this battle, the commander applied simultaneously overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission; destruction of the Russian Austrian Coalition before the Prussians joined their alliance. The deception and feints to the south of Pratzen Ridge were



shaping operations that facilitated the decisive operation.

Austerlitz was a clear victory for the French and a disaster for the Allies. The Allied army was shattered, suffering 27,000 casualties while the French lost 8,000.<sup>31</sup> The remaining portions of the Russian and Austrian Coalition were completely disorganized and incapable of further action or resistance.

The battle of Austerlitz provides an excellent illustration of the link between the decisive operation (Soult's Infantry), the center of gravity (main body of Allied Forces) and achievement of the purpose. This battle underscores the fact that decisive points such as Pratzen Ridge provide an advantage and lead to the center of gravity but do not achieve the purpose.

## Section 5: Conclusion

This chapter reinforces the definition of decisive operations explained in chapter two. Three historical case studies in this chapter enhance the understanding of the definition. The first case study Operation Just Cause portrayed U.S. military forces executing decisive operations in Panama over a brief period to destroy the PDF and restore peace to the Republic.

The second case study, the "Vicksburg Campaign"

represented the conduct of decisive operations to control the Mississippi River over an extended period. It also illustrated MG Grant's undaunted focus on the purpose of the campaign and its link to decisive operations.

The third vignette discussed Napoleon's crushing victory at Austerlitz and depicted decisive operations through the application of overwhelming military capability at a key time and place on the battlefield.

All three case studies presented the proposed definition of decisive operations and its suitability for explaining the end result of wars, campaigns and battles. This definition is conclusive for the assessment of the definition provided by FM 100-40 and answering the thesis question of this paper.

## Chapter 4: FM 100-40 and Decisive Operations

### Section 1: Introduction

Chapters two and three defined decisive operations in a detail manner. Chapter four then examines the definition of the term found in FM 100-40, Tactics, in respect to the definitions elaborated upon in chapter three and answers supporting questions cementing the argument that FM 100-40 definition is inconsistent. Those supporting questions are:

- What is the definition of decisive operations?
- How does the Final Draft of FM 100-40 define "decisive operations"?
- How does FM 100-40 definition compare with FM 100-5?

The first two supporting questions are summarized from discussions in previous chapters. The third supporting question provides agreements and disagreements between the new Tactics FM and FM 100-5, Operations. The greatest disparity is the failure of the new Tactics FM to include the concept of Center of gravity in prescribing doctrine.

As an aside, FM 100-40, Final Draft, Tactics, was not doctrine when this monograph was written. The edition referenced was released only to show the relationship

between FM 100-5, Operations, June 1993 and the coordinating draft for Division Tactics.<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, the final publication of FM 100-40 includes the proposed definition of decisive operations contained in this monograph in order to be in synch with FM 100-5, Operations.

Section 2:

What is the "approved" definition of decisive operations?

The recommended definition of decisive operations is correct and relevant as explained in chapters two and three. It is suggested that the "approved" definition of Decisive operations is "that operation designated by the commander that applies simultaneously overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission."

Figure four depicts a snapshot of simultaneous destruction of the enemy infantry and rotary wing aircraft as friendly Task Forces maneuver to seize the Airfield and achieve the purpose. This sketch epitomizes the application of overwhelming military capability in the form of two armor task forces, direct support artillery and close air to achieve the purpose of denying sustainment. The enemy infantry is destroyed in this instance, the center of gravity.

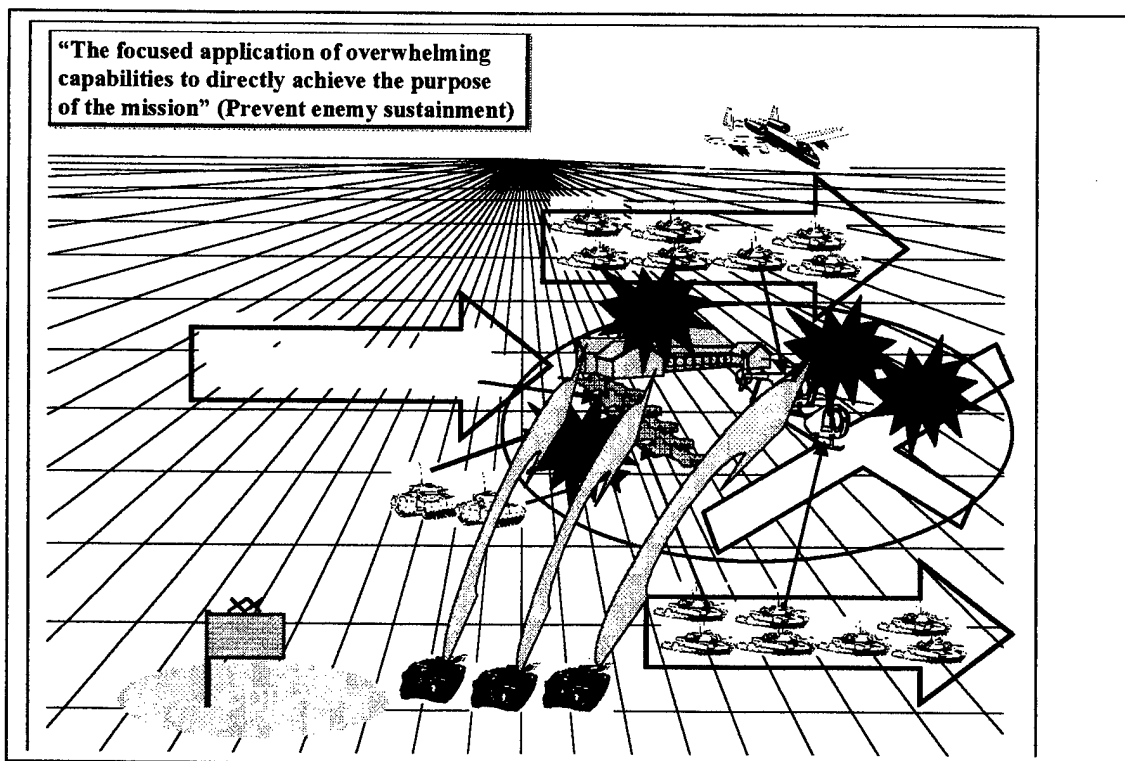


Figure 4.

This scenario discusses the details of one division conducting offensive operations as a small part of a larger offensive operation. The division's purpose of preventing enemy air sustainment by seizing the airfield enabled the next higher unit, a Corps, to defeat the enemy in this zone.

### Section 3:

How does the Final Draft of FM 100-40 define "decisive operations"?

Decisive Operations are defined in FM 100-40 (Coordinating Draft), Tactics, as: "All actions applying to

military capabilities that strike at decisive points. They support the higher's commander's intent. "32

This definition is inconclusive and does not adequately address the purpose of the mission. As discussed in chapter two, Jomini's decisive points are not the same as the Center of gravity. Fundamentally, FM 100-40, a tactical level of war doctrinal manual does not prescribe a center of gravity at the tactical level. The center of gravity as indicated in the scenario and historical case studies must be obtained in order to achieve the purpose. Seizing or destroying an element depicted as a decisive point only provides an advantage to attacking the center of gravity.

Moreover, it oversimplifies the complication of synchronizing all the effects toward the center of gravity through vulnerabilities identified as decisive points. As discussed in chapter two and three, simply using the Commander's intent to leverage combat power through the decisive points does not do this. All levels of war require consideration and the "hubs of power" for both friendly and enemy.

The term, decisive point, is important to consider, but it only influences leveraging combat effects in a tactical operation. FM 100-40 continually underscores

decisive operations and terrain.

The Commander focuses his decisive operation at the decisive point, the possession of which gives the commander with a marked advantage over his opponent. The decisive point is the enemy force, a piece of terrain, or an enemy vulnerability whose loss or destruction will cause the enemy's defense to fail ...<sup>33</sup>

However, decisive point does not fully identify the purpose of the operation if not linked to the Center of gravity. As evidenced, Centers of Gravity exist at all levels of war and provide decisive points for the focus of combat power. Thus, the purpose is clearly linked to the Center of gravity and decisive operation.

#### Section 4:

How does FM 100-40 definition compare with FM 100-5?

Both manuals discuss decisive operations in numerous places. FM 100-40 clearly defines the term whereas FM 100-5 does not. The definition for Decisive Operations as defined in FM 100-40 (Coordinating Draft), Tactics, is: "All actions applying to military capabilities that strike at decisive points. They support the higher's commander's intent. "<sup>34</sup>

Decisive Operations are described in numerous places of FM 100-5, Operations, June 1993. The description ranges from the strategic level of war, "The application of force

to fight and win with minimum casualties," to the framework of the tactical level of war, "...Army Forces use deep operations to set the conditions for decisive future operations."

The definition of decisive operations suggested in this monograph and deduced from FM 100-5 is "that operation designated by the Commander that applies simultaneously overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of the mission."<sup>35</sup>

The FM 100-40 definition agrees with FM 100-5 as assessed by the "approved definition" by the following:

1. FM 100-5 discusses "Synchronization is arranging activities in time and space to mass at the decisive point"<sup>36</sup> therefore agreeing with massing at the decisive point.

2. FM 100-5 agrees with FM 100-40 with the following passage:

Doctrine should reflect new technology and its potential for the future, as well as its effects on Army operations. The US has a major strength in technology. When fielded and incorporated into doctrine, technology affords a significant advantage to soldiers-one that enables the employment of overwhelming and decisive combat power while minimizing the risk to the force...<sup>37</sup>



This passage envisions the definition for decisive operation proposed in FM 100-40.

The FM 100-40 definition disagrees with FM 100-5 as assessed by the "approved definition" in the following cases:

1. FM 100-5 states that "Synchronizing all the elements of combat power where they will have decisive effect on an enemy force in a short period of time is to achieve mass..."<sup>38</sup>

This statement contradicts FM 100-40 decisive operations definition of striking at decisive points and therefore does not concentrate or mass the effects of military forces at the tactical level of war because the center of gravity is not considered. The concentration or mass of effects should focus on the designated center of gravity.

2. FM 100-5 discusses decisive points at the operational level with the following statement.

The arrangement of forces on the ground in relation to one another, the terrain, and the enemy should allow the maximum number of employment options... In order to paralyze the enemy and rapidly gain the initiative for friendly forces, commanders normally seek to engage enemy forces simultaneously throughout the depth and space of the operational arena.<sup>39</sup>

This statement prescribes that decisive operations at the operational level strike the vulnerabilities or

decisive points simultaneously in order to paralyze the enemy and attack the center of gravity.

3. FM 100-5 discusses distributive operations and/or operational art with the following statement.

As he begins operations, the ground commander assembles sufficient combat power to win the decisive battles. He allocates enough combat power to supporting efforts to ensure overall victory. Force agility, initiative, and synchronized operations in depth characterize the rapid generation of combat power for ground operations... In order to conduct decisive action, he (the ground commander) maneuvers them to gain the best positional advantage over the enemy...<sup>40</sup>

4. FM 100-5 discusses operational art and concepts of theater design in terms of centers of gravity and decisive points which tracks with chapter two and three. This is the biggest difference between FM 100-5 and FM 100-40.

The essence of operational art lies in being able to mass effects against the enemy's main source of power--his center of gravity, which he seeks to protect. At any given time, however, a center of gravity may not be immediately discernible. For example, the center of gravity might concern the mass of enemy units, but the mass might not yet be formed. Additionally, the center of gravity may be abstract, such as the enemy's natural will or an alliance structure, or concrete, such as strategic reserves, C2, or industrial bases and LOC.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, there is a center of gravity at each level of war as prescribed by FM 100-5. The centers of gravity at the strategic level of war may be the enemy's natural

will, an alliance, strategic reserves and industrial bases. The COG at the operational level may be the mass of enemy units such as the Republican Guard. The COG though not clearly stated at the tactical level is a tactical counterattack force or decisive terrain.

### Section 5: Conclusion

In order to answer the topic question of compliance of FM 100-40's definition of decisive operations with FM 100-5 and current doctrine this chapter answered three subordinate questions. The first two supporting questions are summarized from discussions in previous chapters. The third supporting question provides agreements and disagreements between the new Tactics FM and FM 100-5, Operations. The biggest disparity is the failure of the new Tactics FM to include the concept of Center of gravity in prescribing doctrine.

The definition prescribed in FM 100-40 is inconsistent and fails to adequately address the purpose of the mission. Moreover, there is an inconsistency between theory and doctrinal terms as both manuals are read.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

This monograph answered the question: Is the term, decisive operations, as defined in the Final Draft of Field Manual (FM) 100-40, Tactics, consistent with Joint and U.S. Army doctrine? No, the term, decisive operations, as defined in the Final Draft of FM 100-40, Tactics, is not consistent with Joint and U.S. Army doctrine. The definition fails to adequately address the purpose of the mission.

FM 100-40 defines decisive operations as "All actions applying to military capabilities that strike at decisive points. They support the higher commander's intent."<sup>42</sup> The term is not defined specifically in any other Joint or U. S. Army doctrinal manual.

Decisive operations are not uniformly described. The term is defined differently in FM 100-40 (Coordinating Draft), Tactics, than it is described in FM 100-5, Operations. An alternative definition for decisive operations was proposed in chapter two that corrects the problem noted in the FM 100-40 suggested definition. It defines decisive operations as an operation designated by the Commander that applies simultaneously overwhelming military capabilities to directly achieve the purpose of

the mission. This definition is explained sequentially by reviewing applicable theory and doctrine.

Traditional Military theorists such as Clausewitz and Jomini contemplated the concept of decisive operations, with terms such as center of gravity, and decisive points. All theoretical explanations for decisive operations recognize the achievement of a purpose by one force over another.

Descriptions of decisive operations provided by the military theorists hold true when explaining doctrine for decisive operations. Joint doctrine only addresses decisive operations through discussion of decisive points and operational art. Theory also provides a better description of decisive operations for the U.S. Army. Theoretical concepts such as center of gravity and decisive points are corner stones upon which doctrine prescribed in U.S. Army Field Manuals is explained.

Selected passages from FM 100-5, Operations, support the argument for including the concept of center of gravity in any definition for decisive operations. FM 100-5's doctrinal logic is represented in chapter two.

Three historical case studies in chapter three enhance the understanding of the definition of decisive operations proposed in chapter two. All three present the proposed

definition of decisive operations and its suitability for explaining the end result of wars, campaigns and battles.

Chapter four then examines the definition of the term found in FM 100-40, Tactics, in respect to the definitions elaborated upon in chapter three and answers supporting questions cementing the argument that FM 100-40 definition is inconsistent.

The first two supporting questions are summarized from discussions in previous chapters. The third supporting question provides agreements and disagreements between the new Tactics FM and FM 100-5, Operations. The biggest disparity is the failure of the new Tactics FM to include the concept of Center of gravity in prescribing doctrine.

In sum, decisive operations are not uniformly defined nor clearly understood. The proposed definition is recommended for consideration in the coordinating draft of FM 100-40, Tactics. The Concept of center of gravity is recommended also for in discussion in the new FM. This concept is key for delineating the purpose of any operation and designating decisive operations. It is also applicable in Joint operations and recommended for incorporation into revised Army doctrinal works and Joint manuals.

<sup>1</sup>US Army, *Field Manual 100-40 (coordinating draft): Tactics*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: August 1998), 2-4.

<sup>2</sup>William Morris, Editor, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976) 342.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 921.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-2: *Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia*, 84.

<sup>5</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 100-5: Operations*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, June 1993), 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1: Operational Terms and Graphics*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, September 1997), 1-46.

<sup>7</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5: Staff Organization and Operations*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, September 1997), 5-8 to 5-9.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor N. Depuy, *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military Biography*, (Edison, N.J: Castle Books, 1992), 121.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 15.

<sup>10</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1335.

<sup>11</sup> Clausewitz, 595.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 617.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Depuy, 379.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 498.

<sup>16</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> JP 1-2, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> FM 101-5-1, 1-87.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 1-5.

<sup>21</sup> War Department, *Field Service Regulations*, (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1942), 11.

<sup>22</sup> FM 100-5, 4-2.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with LTC(P) Dale Eikmeier and MAJ Dave Moore on topic of Concept Paper number three, 14 March 1999.

<sup>24</sup> FM 100-7, 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> FM 100-7, 1-6.

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- <sup>26</sup> FM 100-7, 1-6.
- <sup>27</sup> Leslie Anders, *Austerlitz: A Clash of Command Systems*, *Military Review*, Number 38, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: June, 1958), 50-57.
- <sup>28</sup> Christopher Duffy, *Austerlitz*, (London: Seeley, 1977), 181-184.
- <sup>29</sup> Anders, 53.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 157.
- <sup>32</sup> FM 100-40 (CD), 2-4.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid, 6-2.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, 2-4.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with LTC(P) Dale Eikmeier and MAJ Dave Moore on topic of Concept Paper number three, 16 March 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> FM 100-5, 2-8.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1-2.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, 2-4.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid, 3-11.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid, 6-7.
- <sup>42</sup> FM 100-40 (CD), 2-4.



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